

CHARLIE BAKER
Governor



KARYN POLITO
Lt. Governor

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CONTACT

William Pitman, Governor's Office

william.pitman@state.ma.us

Joseph Truschelli, Department of Veterans' Services

Joseph.Truschelli@MassMail.State.MA.US



**Baker-Polito Administration, Senator McGee Highlight Support for Enhancing
Annuity Benefit Eligibility for Gold Star Families**

Statute change will allow for \$2,000 benefit payments retroactive to eligibility

BOSTON – In recognition of Memorial Day, Governor Charlie Baker, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito, Secretary of Veterans' Services Francisco Ureña, State Senator Thomas M. McGee and other members of the Legislature joined Gold Star Families at the State House to highlight bipartisan efforts enhancing the \$2,000 annuity benefit available to Gold Star families.

The change would allow benefit payments retroactive to initial eligibility upon the death of a servicemember, supporting those who may miss an application deadline, or be unaware of the benefit while supporting their family after a loss. Current statute provides payment retroactive only to the date a family member first applies.

"The Commonwealth is grateful for our devoted servicemembers and their families, and this gesture represents a small token of appreciation to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice while protecting and defending our country," **said Governor Charlie Baker.** "As we approach Memorial Day, our administration is proud to join Senator McGee and the legislature to honor our veterans and Gold Star Families and ensure they are properly supported during a most difficult time."

"The Gold Star Family annuity benefit is currently provided to approximately 2,400 spouses or parents each year," said **Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** "It is an honor to support our Gold Star community by proposing legislation to ensure that those who have lost a loved one receive the full annuity they deserve."

"As a Commonwealth, we must stand firm with our allegiance to our service members and their families," **said Senator Thomas M. McGee, who filed the language that makes this change as an amendment to the Senate budget.** "We must always choose to do the right thing for our service members, veterans, and their families whenever possible, and I am glad to work with my colleagues in the Senate, with the support of the Governor and his Administration, to take this first step to make these changes a reality as part of this year's budget."

The \$2,000 annuity is provided annually by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its Department of Veterans' Services in recognition of service to the parents (Gold Star Parent) or spouse (Gold Star Wife or Husband) of Massachusetts' residents who gave their lives in the service of their country, beginning the year the veteran died.

"Enhancing this benefit demonstrates our commitment as a Commonwealth to those who have served our country," **said Secretary Marylou Sudders of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services.** "It is another way our Department of Veterans' Services can serve as a resource for not only our fallen heroes, but their spouses and families in a time of need."

"This proposal and these efforts are commendable, recognizing and correcting a flaw in current statute to ensure the families of the fallen receive the proper benefits," **said Veterans' Secretary Francisco Ureña.**

"Many Gold Star Families are often unaware of the benefits available to them as they experience the most difficult time in their life," **said Peggy Griffin, President, Greater Boston Chapter of Gold Star Wives.** "This is especially true for widows who do not have service officers working with them or a designated representative to assist them through the maze of paperwork. For those families without help, this bill will be welcome. The Greater Boston Chapter of Gold Star Wives of America supports this proposal and actions like it, that help Gold Star Wives and their families."

The Gold Star Parent Annuity Program began on July 1, 1998 and the Gold Star Spouse began on November 11, 2005. More information and application to apply for the benefit can be found here: <http://www.mass.gov/veterans/benefits-and-services/bonus/annuity.html>.

Last November, Governor Baker signed an Executive Order [reaffirming and restructuring the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services](#), appointing members charged with advising the administration on how to best support the Commonwealth's veterans through improved access to employment and job training, healthcare and well-being services, affordable and accommodating housing choices and educational opportunities.

Earlier in May, Governor Baker announced the Baker-Polito Administration's Fiscal Year 2018 Capital Budget Plan will include a [\\$8 million investment to begin constructing a new long-term care facility at the Chelsea Soldiers' Home for veterans](#), a \$199 million project in conjunction with the federal government. The facility is one of two state operated soldiers' homes that provide both long-term care and domiciliary residential services.

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